DISCUSSION OF GUSTAV BALLY'S PAPER "SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS"*

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I WISH to express my gratitude for the privilege of reading Gustav Bally's paper and for making some comments. My remarks will not be in the form of any criticism since there is hardly anything in it with which I do not agree. I want to limit my comments to the impressions the paper made on me and to the emotional reaction that it elicited.

I might quote an old Latin saying that came to me while reading Professor Bally's paper: "*Tempora mutantur et nos mutamus in illis*" (i.e., times change and we change with them). It is a paper of "Then and Now." How was it then, at the beginning of the psychoanalytic movement? Seventy years ago Sigmund Freud coined the term psychoanalysis when he presented a paper at Charcot's hospital in Paris. As Professor Bally pointed out, Freud wanted psychoanalysis to be considered a natural science and, in spite of great efforts to convince his medical colleagues on this point, he was confronted with an intense and long-lasting resistance from most of his contemporaries.

In reviewing the literature on psychoanalysis written early in this century, one is amazed by the degree of ignorance, ill will, and outspoken evident hostility. An outstanding publication of this kind was an issue of a German magazine which, under the heading "*Gegen Psychoanalyse*" (Against Psychoanalysis) contained a series of anti-analytic articles, two of them written by outstanding professors of psychiatry. Times have changed, and today psychoanalysis, either in its original form as postulated by Freud, or with modifications, is an accepted theory and therapeutic method in the medical and the non-

*Presented at a meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis at The New York Academy of Medicine, April 28, 1965. This article is being published concurrently in the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 26, No. 1 (May), 1966.

medical world. The original skepticism toward the use of dialogue as a therapeutic method, if properly used, has disappeared, and the relationship of analyst and analysand as "partners" has found general acceptance. Early in my psychotherapeutic work, thoughts about this "partnership" came to the fore. The nature of the relationship gave rise to many considerations, and the unique character of the relationship became really clear only with John Macmurray's classification of personal and functional relations.* The psychoanalytic relation, as I see it, can be considered one of a special category. A change has taken place: the dogma of the mirror function of the analyst, as originally stipulated by Freud, has given way to a much more liberalized form, but the final word about the optimal kind of relationship is undoubtedly still to be expected.

Change in the analyst-analysand relationship is not only influenced by improvement of therapeutic technique but to a large extent by the considerably changed outer world (*Aussenwelt*, as Professor Bally called it). The fundamental changes that have taken place during the past 70 years, evolutional and revolutional in character, have resulted in many new influences with which the present-day individual is surrounded: the problem of industrialization and mechanization, which at the beginning of the century was of minor significance, has become more and more relevant. It affects everyone strongly, and has brought with it concepts heretofore unknown: e.g., the question of how status and position in the working community affect individuals sufficiently to become issues to wrestle with; either the individual is able to cope with these problems alone or with a family member or—if these problems become part of a general neurotic pattern—a solution will have to be found in the course of an analytic therapy.

The age of enlightenment, as Professor Bally said, i.e., the "good old time," as some people call it, with strong feelings of nostalgia, has been replaced by the age of anxiety. The impact of the outer world on the individual is undoubtedly of significance but, more than that, as pointed out in the lecture, it is the influence of the parental community that determines the growth and development of a person.

Looking at the family situation, I shall try to present some observations that I made during the many years of my work with neurotic patients. I shall present briefly two case histories that have many

*Macmurray, J. *Reason and Emotion.* London, Faber and Faber, 1947.

similarities but show differences illustrating a number of things that Professor Bally has mentioned in his paper.

The first of the two patients I saw for about four years, beginning in 1929. He was a 25-year-old man, physically in excellent condition but with typical signs of a compulsive-obsessive neurotic person. To mention only one of his symptoms: he spent many evenings sitting on his bed and hesitating to go to sleep because of his fear that, if he would sleep with the window closed, he might die during the night from asphyxiation but, in case he left the window open, he might be in danger of getting pneumonia. His history was as follows. He was the oldest child, son of a very dynamic father, a most successful school principal who, having been a colonel in the army, brought up his children with a pitiless discipline that resembled in every respect rigorous military training. The mother accepted similar treatment from her husband; she was submissive and of no emotional help to the children. At the age of 15, the patient showed the first signs of an emotional disturbance: once he ran away from home, for which he received severe punishment from his father. Then he developed the compulsive-obsessive symptoms that became steadily worse. It was only after a suicidal attempt that his father ordered him to see me for consultation and later for treatment. The father also ordered his son to accept jobs as a teacher. When he found a good position for him out of town, the treatment, which had had some effect, was terminated. By chance, in 1937, I found out that the patient had volunteered in the Franco campaign in Spain and had been killed. The possibility that this death was of a suicidal nature seems to have quite some validity.

This case history interests us here less because of the condition of the son but primarily in view of the father's behavior. The ideal father is expected to be an authority in the parental community. The father in this case was not an ideal father: he was authoritarian and crushed his son's personality completely. In many respects the treatment of the son can be likened to similar cases that we observe today. But while, 30 years ago and more, this kind of a family constellation was frequent and brought many neurotic patients into the office of the psychotherapist, today's much more typical picture is different.

The United States citizen has been described by Bishop Bernard Iddings Bell as a "perennial adolescent." This characterization seems to be exaggerated but doubtlessly contains a great kernel of truth.

Whether Bishop Bell's description would also be true for other countries I do not know. But as far as life in the United States is concerned, this quality of the male as father is doubtlessly important for the life of his family.

As far as the mother is concerned, much has been written about her role. The term "momism," i.e., the overprotective attitude of mothers toward their sons, has found acceptance in our daily language, especially since World War II, when it was found that many young men had to be rejected from military service because of neuroses. Overprotectiveness by the mother was blamed in many cases as the root of the evil.

More significant as an influencing factor on present-day family life is the more recent increase in the number of working women, of career women. A short case history will illustrate the present-day situation. As I indicated before, there is externally in this case a great resemblance to the case already described.

We are dealing here also with a young man who is 23 years old and, like the other one, a student. The father is a successful engineer who likes to spend most of his leisure time playing golf, going to parties, and drinking. The mother is working in a fashion store "just for the fun of it," as she often tells her son. It seems that the marriage is not a very happy one. The son, an only child, tells me that he feels lost at home. As long as he can remember, he had a large allowance. All his wishes were fulfilled by both father and mother. The boredom that overcame the young man reached a point that Arthur Rimbaud, the French poet, has so well described as "*Assez vu, assez vécu*" (I have seen enough, I have lived enough).

The young man felt the need for help and, since his parents approved of it, came to see me. His first words when he was asked what was wrong with him were: "I have nothing to look forward to." He has no friends, no hobbies, no special interests. Most of the time he watches TV. He attends his classes but nothing that he learns in school interests him very much.

Many young boys of high school, college, and university age feel the boredom that is the predominating symptom of my patient. We read often enough about such boys who form a gang and commit all kinds of mischievous acts.

This case and similar observations demonstrate the development

that Professor Bally, in quoting Alexander Mitscherlich, described as the "way from 'Father-authoritian' to 'Fatherless' society." True, one cannot choose one's parents, one can only interpret them; but how much is accomplished with this interpreting? Can we, as Professor Bally says, choose our group? Is it not the group which must choose us and can we at best try to be acceptable to the group?

What will all this mean if one thinks in terms of the future? Will society change more and more and will the degree of anxiety increase? One does not know, and can live only in the hope that man in the future will be more than a connecting link between two computers.